Hindi as international language

†1280. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that it has been decided to set up a World Hindi Secretariat in Mauritius for promoting Hindi as an international language and institutionalizing World Hindi Conferences;

(b) if so, the action taken to set up World Hindi Secretariat in Mauritius; and

(c) the progress made in this regard in the World Hindi Conference recently held in New York?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) Yes.

(b) World Hindi Secretariat has been set up under a bilateral agreement between Government of India and Government of Mauritius. The first Secretary General of the Secretariat, appointed by the Mauritian side for a 3-year term took charge of the post in January 2007. The Deputy Secretary General will be from India. Government are in the process of selecting a suitable person for the post. A meeting of the Executive Board of the Secretariat took place in Mauritius on 24-25 May 2007. The recommendations of the Executive Board included setting up a website of the Secretariat, setting up Hindi Chairs in select universities, bringing out a quarterly newsletter and an annual Hindi magazine.

(c) In the Declaration of the World Hindi Conference, it has been suggested that Governments of India and Mauritius should extend all possible administrative and financial assistance to the Secretariat and should consider setting up of Regional Offices of the Secretariat in Delhi and in 4-5 countries. It has also been suggested that the Secretariat develop a website on "Vishwa Manch Per Hindi" in order to popularise Hindi.

Hosting NAM Summit

1281. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the attitude of the Indian Government towards NAM in the light of the statement by Ms. Condolezza Rice, U.S. Secretary of State;

(b) whether Government plan to host NAM Summit in India in near future;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) In response to questions regarding reports on a statement by the US Secretary of State Dr. Condolezza Rice, MEA's Official Spokesperson has stated on

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

June 29, 2007: "There can be no question of India's firm and abiding commitment to non-alignment. The Non Aligned Movement played a significant role in ending apartheid and colonialism. Today, its relevance continues in promoting South-South cooperation and the democratization of the international system. India remains committed to its ideals."

(b) to (d) India had hosted the 7th NAM Summit in New Delhi in March, 1983. Egypt's offer to host the next 15th NAM Summit in 2009 was accepted by the previous NAM Summit in Cuba.

Problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka

1282. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Sri Lankan Tamils live in great fear, panic and desperation as LTTE on the one side and Sri Lankan Army on the other vow to continue the battle resulting killing of thousands of innocent Tamils indiscriminately and the process of peace is farfetched;

(b) if so, the measures taken by Government to save innocent Tamils being killed; and

(c) whether the issue would be taken to Geneva Meet of UN Human Rights Council particularly about the Refugees Camps in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) There have been hostilities between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE since the beginning of 2006, which have resulted in serious loss of lives including that of Tamil civilians.

(b) and (c) While conveying our concern on civilian casualties, we have emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka that the only solution to the ethnic problem is a negotiated political settlement acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka. We have also emphasised to the Government of Sri Lanka the need to make all possible efforts to revive the peace process. With regard to the issue of Sri Lankan Tamil refuges in India, we have stressed to the Government of Sri Lanka the need to create conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees to their homes.

Cut in US aid to India

1283. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Bush administration has proposed an unwarranted 35 percent cut in aid to India in its 2008 Budget;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;